

(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**historic name Buffalo Valley Schoolother names/site number N/A**2. Location**street & number 2717 Buffalo Valley School RoadNA ☐ not for publicationcity or town Buffalo Valley☒ vicinitystate Tennesseecode TNcounty Putnamcode 141zip code 38548**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet☐ determined eligible for the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other,

(explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

Buffalo Valley School  
Name of Property

Putnam Co., TN  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private  
☒ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

NA

### Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/library

RECREATION AND CULTURE/auditorium

SOCIAL/meeting hall

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other WOOD

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.) NA

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** moved from its original location.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Education

Social History

**Period of Significance**

1929-1955

**Significant Dates**

1929: Construction Date

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** NA

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☒ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Middle Tennessee State University

Buffalo Valley School  
Name of Property

Putnam Co., TN  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Five acres Buffalo Valley 322 NE

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 609529 4000319  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jesse "Bud" Alley, Graduate Student in Public History (Contact: Leslie N. Sharp)  
organization MTSU Center for Historic Preservation date 21 April 2006  
street & number P.O. Box 80 telephone (615) 898-2947  
city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37130

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name \* see continuation sheet  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Buffalo Valley School, Putnam Co., TN

## Narrative Description

Located off of Buffalo Valley School Road in the unincorporated Putnam County community of Buffalo Valley is the 1929 Buffalo Valley School. Built by local volunteers and carpenters, the building is situated on five acres near Indian Creek. The one-story, asphalt-shingle gable roof, red brick building rests on a poured-concrete foundation and has banks of multi-light windows and inset entrances on the façade and two side elevations. Inside, the school retains historic baseboards, vertical beaded-board wainscoting, horizontal wood siding above the chair rails, wood window and door surrounds, auditorium chairs, transoms, wood flooring, and an intact floor plan. Now used as the Buffalo Valley Community Center and library, there have been a few changes made to the building, but it retains its architectural and historic integrity.

The west (front) façade of the T-plan school building is composed of three bays or sections, with the principal entry to the school being the projecting central section capped by a front gable roof. This front gable portion, slightly lower than the main roof, is flanked by two narrow brick chimneys and has a semicircular gable vent. Above the entry reads "BUFFALO VALLEY SCHOOL 1929" in hand-painted lettering. Paired 9/9, double-hung windows flank the inset entry. Although the multi-light sidelights and transom window are historic, the double-leaf door and vinyl siding sheathing the inset are recent additions to the building. Banks of five 9/9, double-hung windows flank the central entry projection. The central window of each band has a portable window air conditioning unit. All windows in the school are topped by concrete lintels and rest on concrete sills. The concrete foundation is capped by a water table. Circa 1970 concrete steps and a circa 1995 wood handicap accessible ramp are visible at the façade. Vinyl covers the narrow eaves on the front façade and all elevations.

A recessed centered entry is located on the south façade of the school. Replacement double-leaf glass-and-wood doors are capped by a multi-light transom. As on the front façade, the door is surrounded by modern vinyl siding. Paired 6/6, double-hung windows flank the entry. A portable air conditioning unit is in the westernmost window. There is a gable vent covered with vinyl at the apex of the gable roof and entry into the basement (now covered over with vinyl) on this elevation. Continuing around the main block of the building is the east or rear façade that contains a bank of what had been six 9/9 windows. Today, the second, fourth, and sixth windows have been filled in with vinyl. Projecting from the east side of the roof is a brick chimney.

The rear ell forming the leg of the "T" extends from the center of the east façade. Along the south side of this ell are two sets of three 9/9, double-hung windows and one smaller 6/6, double-hung window found on the east end of this elevation. The rear or east façade of the projecting ell originally had a door and two windows, but these have been covered over with vinyl. There is also smaller window in the rear gable that has been filled in with vinyl. The northern elevation of the rear ell is identical to the southern elevation and contains two sets of three 9/9, double-hung windows and one smaller 6/6, double-hung window. One removable air conditioning unit has been installed in the bottom half of the smaller window and another one in the 9/9 window closest to the main block.

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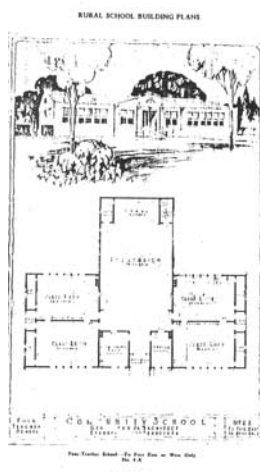
Buffalo Valley School, Putnam Co., TN

Continuing around the building, the east façade of the main block on the north side of the rear ell contains a bank of six 9/9, double-hung windows. A brick chimney or flue is visible near the junction of the main roof and roof of the ell. The north elevation of the main block contains a recessed central entry. Replacement double-leaf glass-and-wood doors are capped by a multi-light transom. As on the other entrances, the door is surrounded by modern vinyl siding. Paired 6/6, double-hung windows flank the entry. There is a gable vent covered with vinyl at the apex of the gable roof.

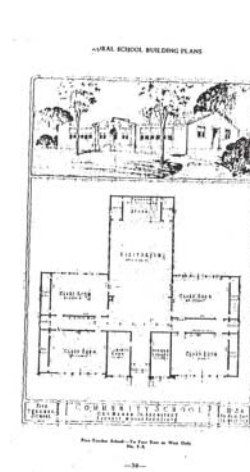
The interior of the Buffalo Valley School retains a high degree of integrity of materials, design, and workmanship. Designed as a four-room school with auditorium, the banks of large windows, interior woodwork, and intact auditorium space are character-defining features of the building. Horizontal board wood siding and vertical board wainscoting are found throughout the school building. Ceilings and floors are also constructed of narrow wood boards. Until recently, the floors were covered with carpeting. Simple wood trim surrounds the interior doors and transom windows. Most interior doors are original and are five-panel solid wood doors with their original hardware. The doorways are all topped by two-light, tilting transom windows.

Buffalo Valley School has a lot of similarities to a four-teacher plan (4A) and a five-teacher plan (5A) seen in the 1928 Rural School Building Plans from the Department of Education, State of Tennessee, Bulletin No.1. The main block of the building contains the four classrooms—one in each corner of the building—with a hall running the length of a building connecting the north and south entrances. A ten-foot wide foyer leads from the main entrance into the auditorium. The ceilings throughout are twelve foot except the auditorium where they are thirteen feet high. The wainscoting is thirty-three inches high and the baseboards are eight inches tall throughout the building.

Plan 4A



Plan 5A



On the north side of the entrance hall are the men's and women's restrooms in the area that used to be used as the school library and a large cloakroom. Indoor plumbing was added in 1955. On the south side of the foyer is the kitchen. Originally, a cloakroom and storage room, this area was converted to a kitchen in 1936.

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Buffalo Valley School, Putnam Co., TN

The kitchen has been renovated and an electric range has replaced a wood-burning stove. In addition, running hot and cold water has been added to the building over its lifespan as a school. The conversion took place approximately 1955 according to school board records.<sup>1</sup> The kitchen has wood cabinets with laminate counters, a center island, and linoleum floors dating to ca. 1977 according to Erlene Makitika.<sup>2</sup> The kitchen has a pass through window that opens into the hallway.

Occupying the rear ell of the building, the auditorium is intact. It contains its original hardwood floors, stage, hand-painted screen, and historic chairs. The auditorium is entered by a large central opening from the entrance foyer or by doors flanking each side of the opening. Three fans and two rows of florescent lights hang from the original wood ceiling. The auditorium currently has 112 seats, which are molded maple wood and are bolted to the floor. Originally, there were several more rows of seats, but these were removed at an unknown time. Although not the original seats, these features are historic and have polychromatic Art Deco detailing featuring an inverted sunburst. The circa 1948-49 American Seating Company seats replaced seats flooded out in 1948.<sup>3</sup> There are two sections of seating separated by a center aisle. There are side aisles on either side of the seating. The stage is thirty-inches high and ten-and-one-half-feet wide. It has a skirt of bead board that is original. The ceiling height in the auditorium is thirteen-feet. Originally there was set of curtains on the cased opening of the stage but today the stage is open. The backdrop of the stage contains an outstanding hand-painted screen featuring advertisements for local businesses. These are the original advertisements by the community but they were re-touched by an area artist in the 1980s according to Ms Earlene Makitika.<sup>4</sup> The stage is accessed on either side by three wood steps that lead beside either side of the stage via a five-paneled door. The areas on either side of the stage are lit by 6/6, double-hung windows mentioned in the exterior description. The old cakewalk outlines from past fundraisers are still faintly visible on the stage.

The room in the southwest corner of the building is accessed from either the south wall of the kitchen or through one of two doors from the main hallway. Originally a classroom, this room now serves as a meeting room and an exhibit space that contains memorabilia and photographs from when the building was a school. This room, like the other classrooms, contains wood floors (covered by carpet), baseboards, vertical beaded-board wainscoting, wood walls, and a wood ceiling. A nonhistoric fan and fluorescent lights hang from the ceiling. Across the hallway is the southeast classroom, which is now used as the community library. It is accessed by one of two doors. It has its original wood floors, baseboards, vertical board wainscoting, walls, and ceilings. A fan and fluorescent lights hang from the ceiling. Three windows of the original band of six on its east wall have been filled in.

On the north side of the building are two more classrooms. The northeast classroom is now being used as storage. Its placement and access are the mirror image of the southeast classroom or library. This room

<sup>1</sup> Putnam County School Board Minutes Book,

<sup>2</sup> Erlene Makitika, (former student), in discussion with the author, 6 May 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Wretschko. National Sales Manager American Chair Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Mr. Wretschko furnished copy of order placed by Nashville Products Co. and the American Chair Company factory order, dated 18 February 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Makitika, 6 May 2005. These advertising screens were relatively common features of 1930s and 1940s schools. Sunnyside School (NR Listed 1999) in Harris County, Georgia, contains a similar screen of the same vintage.

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Buffalo Valley School, Putnam Co., TN

contains its wood floors (covered by carpet), baseboards, vertical board wainscoting, walls, and ceilings. A fan, fluorescent lights, and a heater hang from the ceiling. The historic blackboard has been painted over. Formerly heated by a stove, the brick flue is still in the southeast corner of the room, although it no longer functions. All of the windows remain intact. On the east side of the hallway outside of the northeast classroom is a historic blackboard.

The northwest classroom is now used as meeting room or classroom. It has wood floors (covered by carpet), baseboards, vertical board wainscoting, walls, and ceilings. A fan, fluorescent lights, and a heater hang from the ceiling. The historic blackboards have been painted over. Formerly heated by a stove, the brick flue is still in the southwest corner of the room, although it no longer functions. All of the windows remain intact. Between this classroom and the restrooms is a small storage room accessed from the main hallway.

According to Mr. Bud Maddux, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) electrified the building in 1936. The original lights were a single light bulb hanging from a cord in the center of the ceiling of each room.<sup>5</sup> Today, simple fluorescent lights hang from the ceilings in the auditorium, classrooms, and hallways. J.T. Askew recounted that the auditorium was originally lit by kerosene lamps.<sup>6</sup> Originally the building was heated with individual potbellied stoves in each room. School board minutes indicate on July 17, 1950, a motion was made to solicit bids for a central heating furnace at Buffalo Valley School. These were replaced circa 1951 by two furnaces from Philips & Buttdorf, furnace fabricators.<sup>7</sup> The basement is dry and houses these two furnaces that are now inoperable. Several interior gas heaters have replaced them. A propane tank is located on the northeast side of the school. Indoor plumbing was added in 1955.

The school is accessed from the main road by a circular gravel driveway. Just west of the school building are open fields that were used as a playground by the school children. Adjacent to the school building to the south, Putnam County has moved in some dumpsters and a portable shed. These are surrounded by a chain link fence and have not been counted in the resource count as they appear to be easily removed.

The area surrounding Buffalo Valley School is rural and agricultural. The topography is hilly with steep hollows and rolling hills.

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<sup>5</sup> Jim "Bud" Maddux, (former student) discussion with the author, 22 April 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Askew, 13 May 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Putnam County School Board, *Putnam County School Board Minutes*, (Cookeville, Tennessee, 7-29-1-35), 187; R.L. Polk, *R.L. Polk's City Directory, Nashville, TN, 1950*, Chicago, 1950, 75.

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Buffalo Valley School Putnam Co., TN

## Statement of Significance

The Buffalo Valley School in rural Putnam County is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criteria A and C for its significance in Architecture, Education, and Social History. The building has been a center of community life in Buffalo Valley since its construction in 1929. Used as a school and community center until the school closed in 1966, the building still functions as a community center and library. Throughout its history the building has hosted a variety of activities including fairs, plays, movies, and musical performances. The building is significant in terms of education as it was built to serve the educational needs of the children in the surrounding Buffalo Valley community from its construction in 1929 until it closed the mid 1960s during the county consolidation of schools. Architecturally, the school is a good and intact example of a Colonial Revival-influenced school in Putnam County. There have been some minor changes to the building but it retains banks of multi-light windows, interior woodwork, auditorium, most of its interior classroom floor plan, all significant features of schools.

The Buffalo Valley School has roots in the agrarian reform movement of the Progressive Party and embodies the educational reforms of such farsighted educators as Fletcher B. Dresslar and the political support of Governor Austin Peay's reforms in Tennessee.<sup>8</sup> Put into service for the school year beginning in 1929, it continued as a school until it was retired in 1966 due to diminished enrollment. Over the years, the building was an important source of pride for the citizens of the community. In addition to education, the building functioned as a gathering place for the community. In the 1930s, movies were shown and prior to electricity they were powered by a dynamo run from a Model T Ford with cables fed in through the windows.<sup>9</sup> The operators were Spurrell and Goldie Heflin from Lancaster, Tennessee.<sup>10</sup> Throughout the 1940s, thanks to the efforts of a progressive principal, stars of the Grand Ole Opry regularly played the Buffalo Valley School stage. The procession of country stars stopping over for local performances en route to larger venues included Johnny Cash, Flatt and Scruggs, Uncle Dave Macon, The Carter Family, Chet Atkins and others.<sup>11</sup> Upon removal from the school system as an active educational facility, a request was made by the community leaders that it be turned over to them for community use rather than being sold as surplus.<sup>12</sup>

From that time on, the building has supported many functions of the community, including serving as a location for the Head Start programs of four communities: Byrdstown, Livingston, Cookeville, and

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<sup>8</sup> Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes in Tennessee, 1900-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998): 57; Fletcher B. Dresslar joined the faculty of the new George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville in 1912. Dresslar was a leader for the advancement of many reforms in public education, locally and nationally. Among his other duties, Dresslar served as a Special Agent for the U.S. Department of Education and as advisor to the Rosenwald School Fund. This was a fund initially set up by Julius Rosenwald, chairman of Sears & Roebuck, to improve and assist African-American education in the South. Eventually, the designs of school buildings were made available to public rural schools.

<sup>9</sup> Ted Huddleston, (long time resident of Buffalo Valley) discussion with the author, 22 April 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Dorothy Denny Stout, (former student and daughter of longtime principal) telephone discussion with author, 16 May 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>12</sup> *Putnam County School Board Minutes*, 7-61-8-68. (Cookeville), 301.

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Buffalo Valley School Putnam Co., TN

Jamestown. A fundamental non-denominational church used the building for its services for eight years.<sup>13</sup> Today, the building retains its significant role in the community by serving as a lending library to those in the valley. Community members established the library to serve their community when the bookmobile was eliminated from the county budget.<sup>14</sup>

The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance. The school retains most of its original features and hosts an annual reunion for its former students, with many coming from a long distance to attend.

**Historical Narrative**

Buffalo Valley was at one time a prosperous section of the county. Dependent on the river, it was settled in the 1850s.<sup>15</sup> Buffalo Valley was comprised mainly of farmers and the allied support systems they required like blacksmiths, gristmills and local merchants.<sup>16</sup> Logging was an important industry in the region throughout the nineteenth century. The Caney Fork River, essential to the early logging industry, was also a problem for the Buffalo Valley because of frequent flooding. By the 1890s the railroad arrived in the region, easing the dependency of communities in the valley on river transportation.

The first school in the area was a two-story house. Until 1913 the school was a subscription school, requiring students to pay to attend the three-month school term. During the 1920s a new school was planned since the population had grown and the old school building no longer adequately served the community's needs. The Jared Medley family donated the land, at least in part. Surveying methods were not the best in rural Tennessee and there are several deeds that improved and clarified the plat over the next two decades. Construction of the foundation for the Buffalo Valley School began in 1926 according to the land deed. The schoolhouse was built with local labor that included Henry Buckner, Waymon Leftwich, Cass Leftwich, Jo Bo Medley, and Lem Brown, according to Carolyn Huddleston of the community. The bricks for the school came from Nashville. Flooding of the Caney Fork River delayed completion of the building until two years later.<sup>17</sup>

The school was built to accommodate five teachers and grades first through eighth. Although no plans have been found, the layout of Buffalo Valley School is similar to many community schools built during the 1910s and 1920s. As residents today remember it, the five-teacher school was controversial when planned. Some residents wanted the larger school, determined that the booming area could eventually support five teachers. Others held a more conservative outlook and their vision proved correct. The school never reached its capacity as a five-teacher school.<sup>18</sup> It was assigned three teachers when it opened in 1929 and retained

<sup>13</sup> Makitika, 6 April 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Significantly, according to local leader Carolyn Huddleston, the biggest users are a four-year-old girl and a ninety-two year old lady. Putnam County now owns the land and building.

<sup>15</sup> Mary DeLozier, *Putnam County Tennessee 1850-1970* (Nashville: Putnam County, Tennessee, 1979), 18.

<sup>16</sup> Carolyn Huddleston, A private collection of miscellaneous notes, correspondence and copies of article from a variety of sources including interviews with former residents.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Askew, 13 May 2005.

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Buffalo Valley School Putnam Co., TN

that number off and on until the 1960s, except for the war, as the school age population in the valley shrank. The teachers in the 1930 school year were, Jenny Gilbrey, Anna Dell Harp, and Lorraine Huddleston.<sup>19</sup> Between 1929 and 1937 three teachers taught an average of 75 students. From 1938 until 1944 the student population dropped to 50, although there were still three teachers. Post- WWII, 1945 to 1953 about 90 students attended the school each year and there was talk of hiring a fourth teacher. However, during the rest of the 1950s until the school closed in 1966, there were only two teachers for 50 students each year. Ironically, the improved roads that supposedly offered much growth to the area did not deliver it. Instead, the population of the area would decline over the twentieth century as agricultural technology improved requiring less manpower and people left the country for cities where they could find jobs.

The minutes of the school board reflect an unspecified appropriation for the completion of the Buffalo Valley School in October 1929.<sup>20</sup> The school year ran from September to May. Buffalo Valley School had a range of activities for its students, including basketball for the boys and girls. The students of the decade of the thirties experienced valley flooding in 1932. Luke Leftwich remembers seeing the stars of the Grand Ole Opry perform in its stage as a boy in the mid thirties. TVA brought electricity to the school in 1936 according to former student Bud Maddux. Bud Maddux also remembers climbing out the classroom window to fix the school bell that would get stuck in the afternoon.<sup>21</sup> In 1938, cooks came to the school and hot lunches replaced the newspaper wrapped homemade ones according to J.T. Askew. The cooks lived with the Askew family during the week and brought home the excess vegetables for the family to eat. Mrs. Randolph and Mrs. Carlin served in that capacity and rode the train back to Cookeville on the weekend.<sup>22</sup> The cooks worked with no running water. It had to be retrieved every day from across the meadow at the Maddux store (no longer extant).

A major event in the area began in 1941 when the TVA announced plans to build the Center Hill Dam and began acquiring property. The construction was interrupted by the outbreak of the war and activity did not resume until late 1947. Dorothy Stout relates that hot meals resumed following the war in 1946 and she remembers Dean Scruggs becoming the cook at school.<sup>23</sup>

On February 13, 1948, rain began to fall. Supposedly four inches fell that afternoon. Rains continued through the night and by Valentine's Day at noon, the children had to be sent home, as the waters were rising fast in the schoolyard. Some were taken out by canoe. By the next day, according to Mrs. Dorothy Stout, her father and some other men entered the school in a canoe, the water was so high.<sup>24</sup> As the water receded, the teachers remained at work without children as they cleaned to have it readied for school again. The

<sup>19</sup> Putnam County School Board Minutes, 1929-1935, 18; Putnam County School Board Minutes, varying years; The following is a list of some of the 1930s teachers who taught at Buffalo Valley: 1931-Dallas Leftwich, Nelle S. Beasley, and Lorraine Huddleston; 1935-Herman Alcorn, Lorraine Huddleston, and Clara Nelle Ashburn; 1936-Lorraine Maddux, Clara Jared; 1937-Dallas Leftwich, Maddux and Douglas Nichols; 1938-T.J. "Doc" Ford, Maddux, Nell Beasley, Principal Clara Jared, and Goodwin Harding.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>21</sup> Maddux, 22 April 2005.

<sup>22</sup> J.T. Askew, 13 May 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Stout, 16 May 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

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damage was repaired for the most part and school returned to normal except in the auditorium, which led to the replacement of the seats. The outhouses also had to be replaced due to flooding (no above-ground remains of the outhouses exist).

By 1949, the TVA progress on the Center Hill Dam was complete enough to stop any future flooding of the valley. Like improved transportation, TVA did not produce prosperity for the Valley; instead it consumed hundreds of farms in the area forever changing the character of it. In the fifties, school continued and improvements were made to the building. Phillips and Buttdorf, a Nashville furnace maker, installed the central coal furnaces in the fall of 1950.<sup>25</sup> In the same period, the wells at the school were found to be too shallow and new wells were approved.<sup>26</sup> Inside bathrooms were added in 1955. The principal at that time Dorothy Denny managed to purchase a projector and the school showed movies to the community until a new cinema opened in Baxter. Cakewalks and school plays provided a source of revenue for the school during this time. The old cakewalk outlines are still visible on the school stage. As the decade wore on, more of the population of the farming community left for better and more predictable incomes in the cities.

The Interstate highway took center stage in Putnam County in the 1960s. It created jobs yet radically changed the cultural fabric of pastoral Buffalo Valley. The shrinking population in rural areas put strains on the small schoolhouse to survive. The expenses of operating a school for a small population were no longer economical. Buffalo Valley School was cut to two teachers and finally to one in its last year as a schoolhouse. In September, Mrs. Denny was transferred to Baxter Elementary and Mrs. Beatrice Craighead was sent to Buffalo Valley as principal. Low attendance at some schools including Buffalo Valley was cited at the 24 September 1966 school board meeting. The last principal was Anita Phillips Smith as the school was closed officially in the fall of 1966.<sup>27</sup> The consolidation of outlying county schools to more centralized schools was a common phenomenon in the 1950s and 1960s all over the country.

As early as 1968 after the closing of the school and its attempted sale, Mr. James Christian, chairman of the Buffalo Valley Community group asked for it to become their home. There are two organizations today that administer the building, The Buffalo Valley Community Center Organization, which has officers, by-laws, and the overall responsibility of operating the facility, and the Buffalo Lending Library, a 501C3 organization which runs the library and handles any funds generated by the various fundraising efforts to support it.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 17 July 1950,185.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 4 December 1951, 241.

<sup>27</sup> Stout interview. 16 May 2005.

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## Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is parcel 16 on property tax map 60, Putnam County. See attached Putnam County property tax map.

## Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all the land (5 acres) currently and historically associated with the Buffalo Valley School and owned by Putnam County at this location.

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## Photographs

Photographs by: Carroll Van West and Leslie N. Sharp  
Date Taken: Spring 2005  
Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission

- 1 of 28: Overview of Buffalo Valley School and surrounding land; Photographer facing southeast.
- 2 of 28: Buffalo Valley School; Photographer facing southeast.
- 3 of 28: Front or west façade of Buffalo Valley School; Photographer facing east.
- 4 of 28: Detail of front or west façade; Photographer facing north.
- 5 of 28: Southwest corner and south façade of school; Photographer facing northeast.
- 6 of 28: South façade and rear ell; Photographer facing north.
- 7 of 28: Southeast corner and rear ell; Photographer facing northwest.
- 8 of 28: Southeast corner of rear ell and west façade of rear ell; Photographer facing northwest.
- 9 of 28: North façade of rear ell and northeast corner of school; Photographer facing south.
- 10 of 28: North façade of school; Photographer facing south-southeast.
- 11 of 28: Northwest corner of school and front or west façade; Photographer facing southeast.
- 12 of 28: Close-up of front or west façade of school; Photographer facing east.
- 13 of 28: Entry foyer looking toward auditorium with advertisement screen in the background; Photographer facing east.
- 14 of 28: Kitchen looking into southwest classroom; Photographer facing southwest.
- 15 of 28: Auditorium; Photographer facing east.
- 16 of 28: Auditorium looking toward front or main entrance; Photographer facing west.
- 17 of 28: Auditorium, detail of Art Deco-influenced seating; Photographer facing north.

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- 18 of 28: Auditorium advertisement screen on stage; Photographer facing east.
- 19 of 28: Hallway and pass through window into the kitchen, south entrance in back ground; Photographer facing southwest.
- 20 of 28: Hallway with north entrance in the background; Photographer facing north.
- 21 of 28: Southwest classroom; Photographer facing northeast.
- 22 of 28: Southeast classroom or library; Photographer southwest.
- 23 of 28: Southeast classroom or library; Photographer facing north.
- 24 of 28: Northeast classroom; Photographer facing northeast.
- 25 of 28: Northeast classroom; Photographer facing southwest.
- 26 of 28: Detail of five-panel door leading into the northwest classroom; Photographer facing northwest.
- 27 of 28: Northwest classroom; Photographer facing south.
- 28 of 28: Surrounding landscape showing where playground used to be; Photographer facing west.

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## Owner

Putnam County. Parks and Recreation maintains the building. County Board of Education owns the building. Parks – 240 Carlen Drive, Cookeville, TN 38501. Education – Director of Schools, Dr. Michael R. Martin, 1400 Spring Street, Cookeville 38506